

CONSIDERATIONS
ON A
SEPARATION *of the* METHODISTS
FROM THE
ESTABLISHED CHURCH;
ADDRESSED
TO SUCH OF THEM AS ARE FRIENDLY TO THAT
MEASURE,
AND PARTICULARLY TO THOSE IN THE
CITY OF BRISTOL.

BY A MEMBER *of the* ESTABLISHED CHURCH.
ALEXANDER KNOX

*Amicus Socrates.—Amicus Plato.—Magis Amica
Veritas.*

THIRD EDITION.

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at

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

CHURCH

OF THE

UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

AND

OF THE

WORLD

OF THE

CHURCH

OF THE

UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

I AM not a Member of the Methodist Society—I differ from the Methodists in a variety of instances—but I value their acknowledged usefulness—I respect their pious zeal—and I earnestly wish, if possible, to preserve the one from obstruction, and the other from misdirection. On this account I venture to offer to such of them as are disposed to separate from the established Church—and particularly to those in the city of Bristol—a few plain observations on that interesting question, which I entreat them to weigh with candour and with attention.

“My Son,” saith Solomon, “*Fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.*”—My friends, if this scripture hath any force, it certainly condemns *unnecessary alterations*.—And it does so, because such alterations generally tend to disturb the public order, and are doubtful with respect to their consequences.—Now, permit me to ask you, is the alteration, which you propose to make in the Methodist system, *necessary*? Does reason or does experience evince, that the well-being of Methodism depends upon its separation from the established Church? The Methodists, from their first commencement, have maintained communion with the Church *strictly and conscientiously*;—and during that period they have prospered, as no other society of Christians has done since the days of the Apostles. Can it be *necessary* for them then, after the experience of half a century, to forsake the way in which God hath blessed them—the way, which lies as open and as plain before them now, as it did at the beginning? Is it possible for the most inventive fancy to dream of *necessity* in a case like this? And if there be no necessity, how will

you reconcile what you are about to do, with this obvious, indisputable direction ?

Consider I pray you, what light this measure must appear in to the thinking part of the world. "*Let not, saith the Apostle, " the good which is in you, be evil spoken of."*—But is it possible for you to act in more direct contradiction to this precept, than by the step which you are just now meditating ? For fifty years, you have been declaring to all mankind, your steady, conscientious attachment to the established Church.—You have professed, times without number, that you considered yourselves called, *not to form a sect*, but to invite sinners of every sect and party, not from their respective persuasions, but merely from sin to true religion and virtue ; and that every circumstance in your rise, progress, and success, concurred to convince you, that this was the will of God concerning you. Has then any event occurred, which proves all this to have been a mistake, and which will justify you, in thus trampling on your own uniform professions ? Are you again repelled from the altars of the church ? Do its ministers lead on mobs at this day to extirpate you ? Or is the signal for persecution sounded from its pulpits ? All this, it seems, you formerly encountered.—But all this was insufficient to divert you from that path, in which, you believed you found, the presence and the blessing of your God.—Nay, amidst all this, you made those very declarations which you are now about to violate.—Had you then thought of separation ; had you then listened to the expostulations of your milder and more sagacious opponents, who saw that the power of the Methodists lay in their peculiar catholicism, like the strength of Sampson in his hair, and therefore repeatedly urged upon you the question, " Why do you not leave us ?" what even in that case your principles as *Christians* would not have justified, your weaknesses as *Men* might have excused.—But to have rejected such a measure *then*, and to adopt it *now* ; to have protested against it when there

was some shadow of cause, and to violate all those protestations now when there is *no cause*—now when the established Church comparatively caresses you—invites you to its sacraments, and is ready almost to fold you in its bosom! What my friends can we say to this? Is it not just matter of offence, to Jew and Gentile as well as to the Church of God? Nay, will not charity itself be reduced to the dilemma, of either concluding, that the Methodists, having no fixed principles, are carried about with every wind of doctrine, or that for fifty years they have been wearing a mask which they at length find it convenient to throw off?

Think, I pray you, what you are likely to gain by this inconsistent procedure?—Can you hope that in consequence of such an alteration, your audiences will increase, and your societies grow in *number* and in *purity*? Hitherto your preaching has been attended by persons of all persuasions.—And why? Because your system was captivating—you were the friends of all—the antagonists of none.—You renounced every thought of making *profelytes*, and sought only to make *Christians*.—Can you seriously think that this unprecedented liberality had not its share, in drawing many of your most valuable hearers; or are you certain that you will be equally attended, when you assume an opposite character? Is it not much more likely that you will, in a short time, have a fixed congregation, like any other sect of Dissenters? But will your societies increase? Can you imagine that serious persons will be equally disposed to unite with you, when that union will imply the dissolution of their former religious connexions? Are you not aware that this objection may affect those most, who are most steady in their tempers and conscientious in their principles? Nay may not such persons be apt to consider the passage in the Proverbs, quoted above, as a divine command to avoid you—“*Meddle not with those who are given to change*?”—But if you really think that becoming

a member of your society has a tendency to promote religion in the heart and life, how can you answer it to God thus needlessly to narrow the passage, and to throw an almost insurmountable stumbling-block in the way? But will you be compensated for this by the increased *purity* of your societies? This to be sure might make up for the loss of number. But is there ground to hope for it? *Now, Piety* is the only bond of union which you acknowledge; and when any of your members lose this, you seldom have the trouble of expelling them, as they naturally fall off of themselves.—But will this be the case when you become a separate sect? Will not the children of Methodists then grow up Methodists, as the children of Presbyterians now grow up Presbyterians? And will not the unavoidable consequence of this be, that in the course of a few years the major part of the Methodists will be distinguished (if distinguished at all, from the rest of the world) only by a little decency of behaviour, and perhaps somewhat of the form of religion?

I am well aware that when you view your future circumstances through the medium of your present prejudices, you may amuse yourselves with a prospect very different from this—and you may perhaps devise fine theories for making piety hereditary.—But unfortunately, experience gives the lie to all these.—Every sect that has appeared in the Christian world, how exemplary soever in its first stage, has in the lapse of generations fallen first into formality, then into carelessness; and in some instances, at length into an extreme of irreligion.—You alone seemed to have found out the secret of keeping yourselves permanently pure.—You alone had it in your power, as far as the unavoidable imperfection of human nature would admit, to exclude from your community all secular mixture, and to preserve your character from being sullied by the follies, and your principles from being corrupted by the degeneracy, even of your own children.—You, and you only, possessed

this invaluable advantage, because you were not a *sect*, but merely a *society*, and because the tie of your union was neither *hereditary* nor *sacramental*, but solely *personal* and solely *spiritual*.—And, strange to tell ! it is this very distinguishing privilege, which, after fifty years experience of its utility, you have now determined to throw away !

Once more, I entreat you to consider this circumstance well, before you take the step, which when once taken you will probably never have power to recall. Ask your own reason, how it will be possible for you to shun degeneracy under the projected system ? Will not those who are baptized amongst the Methodists be esteemed, and fairly esteemed, component parts of the body ? Will not the Methodists by birth and education, or, as they might be termed, *traditional* Methodists, soon out-number those who have become Methodists, from conviction and choice ? And does not the greater number, of whatever society, fix its character without, and direct its movements within ? Consequently, will not the traditional Methodists in a short time become, to all intents and purposes, the *Body* ?—But where then will be the *Soul* of Methodism ? Where will be its strictness, its exemplariness, its zeal, its purity ?—Alas ! will they not be *then*, where you yourselves think, they are, amongst other sects of Dissenters, *now*,—in the fading recollection of the aged, and in the neglected volumes that are still suffered to lie upon the dusty shelves of the young ?

But you are thoroughly convinced, it seems, that, a “ few ministers and members excepted, the Church of England, to which you have been “ united, has lost the life and power of religion,” and therefore you “ have thought it your duty to “ form yourselves into an independent Church.” Of the *charity*, the *candour*, or the *truth* of this sweeping censure, I say nothing.—(See note No. 1.) But granting, for argument's sake, that it is the fact, can you seriously think that the conclusion is a just

one? You know that the church to which you have been united, is at least no worse at this day, than it has been during the last fifty years. Consequently, if it is your duty to separate from it *now*, on account of the misconduct of its ministers and members, it was equally your duty at all times during that period. And of course, ever since your first commencement, you have continued in the habitual neglect of your duty; that is, in wilful sin; and you have been aggravating that sin, by repeated declarations of attachment and adherence to this same corrupt and degenerate Church. Now, I leave it to your own reason to determine, whether this supposition is for the credit of methodism?—Is it not, coming from yourselves, a severer censure than it was ever possible for your enemies to pass upon you?—But if on the other hand, you allow, that you and your predecessors have not committed sin by living so long in communion with the established church, what arguments can you adduce to prove that your separation from it is *now* become a duty?

If it is a *duty* to separate from a church because the ministers and members of that church are in general destitute of “the life and power of religion,” may it not fairly be asked—Why did our Lord maintain constant communion with the Jewish Church?—You will allow that when our Lord was upon earth, that church was at least as corrupt in practice, as the church established in these countries, is at this day,—and yet you know He joined regularly in its worship; attended all the feasts at Jerusalem, even those of human appointment, and at one time wrought a miracle in order to pay a voluntary tribute to the temple. Nay more, he inculcated the same conduct on his disciples in terms which one might think should be sufficient to end all dispute upon this subject. “The Scribes and Pharisees,” saith he, “sit in Moses’s seat; whatsoever therefore they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not “ye after their ways, for *they say and do not.*”—

Surely our Lord could never have spoken thus, if he had thought, or intended us to think, that the misconduct of Ministers invalidates their functions, or furnishes just ground for Separation.

How exactly the Apostles copied the example of their divine Master in this respect, you, my friends, need not be informed. You know, that even then, when the Jewish worship was in effect abrogated, and the obligation to attend upon it, as a divine institution, of course at an end, still "the disciples continued daily with one accord in the temple." Still "Peter and John went up into the temple at the hour of prayer;" and as far as we can trace the Apostolic history, we still find St. Paul, although peculiarly the Apostle of the Gentiles, maintaining religious intercourse with the Jews, joining with them in divine worship, and not once hinting at *separation*, except when his overtures to communion were obstinately, and insolently rejected. From all this does it not inevitably follow, that where the leading truths of religion are still acknowledged in a church, and the public worship of God regularly performed, the mere practical degeneracy of its members or its ministers, neither makes *communion* with that church a *sin*, nor of course, *separation* from it a *duty*?

It has been generally allowed, that to insist upon any thing as a *duty* which the word of God does not enjoin, is mere *superstition*.—

Where then, let me ask you, is the duty of which you speak inculcated? In what part of holy scripture do you find even an intimation that when the great body of professing Christians, in the world at large, or in any particular country, should become degenerate in their practice, the few, who should still retain "the life and power of religion," should separate from the rest, so as to form themselves into a distinct church? Our Lord clearly foresaw that such degeneracy would take place. If therefore it had been his intention, that in this case, the *real* should be separated from the *nominal*

Christians, would he not have declared it? But does he do so? Is there a single hint to this purpose in the whole Gospel? No, my friends, but there is much, very much against it. For scarcely in a single instance, does our Lord describe the circumstances of the church in future ages, but he accompanies it with a caution against this very *delusion*.

The two well-known parables of the *tares* and the *net cast into the sea* are evidently intended for this special purpose. In the former of these the *tares cannot mean the children of the wicked one in the world at large*. No one could pretend to say that *these* did not originate until the Gospel seed was sown, or that they did not appear before that seed sprung up, nor can it be imagined that the existence of the children of the wicked one, *in the world at large* could have caused any wonder to the Servants. Of course the *tares* must denote the children of the wicked one *within the visible church*, for of these alone it could be said, that when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the *tares* also—and of these alone the servants could with any rationality say, “Sir, “didst thou not sow good seed in thy field, from “whence then hath it *tares*?” Nor let it be said that the *tares* here mean those only, who have the form of Religion, but are destitute of its power. Our Lord’s words will admit of no such limitation; He says expressly, “The *tares* are the “children of the wicked one,” that is sinners generally—irreligious and profane persons of every character and species.—And in terms no less express, he pronounces the irreversible decree of Providence, “Let both grow together until the harvest;”—that is, as plain as words can make it—*Let the children of the kingdom, and the children of the wicked one, continue mingled in the visible church until the end of the world.*

Doubtless our Lord deemed this subject to be of peculiar importance, else he would not have given line upon line, and precept upon precept, respecting

it. Perhaps he did so, because he foresaw that, in this instance particularly, men would pretend to serve him by disobeying him. Be it as it may, He repeats the lesson, and if possible, in terms still plainer in the parable of the *net cast into the sea*.—The net is evidently the *Gospel*.—Those whom it gathers, form the visible church. Are these but of one kind—the good only? No—they are, “of every kind,”—both bad and good.—But how long is this mixture of characters to continue? Is it only until they who are employed in the work find it convenient to make a separation? By no means—This is not *their* province, nor is the present the time.—This mixed state of things is to continue until the net shall be brought to shore, i. e. until the consummation of all things. *Then, but not sooner*, the good are to be gathered into vessels—and the bad cast away.

But our Lord does not merely foretel the fact—he condescends in some degree to let us into the meaning of this mysterious arrangement. In the parable of the tares he intimates that the servants wondered when they first observed the tares among the wheat; and it cannot be doubted, but that the mixed state of the visible church, both in the prospect and in the event, was matter of wonder as well as regret to the Apostles and their immediate followers. To abate their wonder, and to allay their regret seems to be the design of the parable of the *Leaven*. *This*, like the *salt of the earth*, and the *light of the world*, in the sermon on the Mount, pretty evidently means, the true servants of God. But the leaven is *hid*, that is, so blended and mingled as to be almost concealed from view, “in three measures of meal.” What is this but the very same commixture which is represented in the two other parables? Only here, the gracious purpose is intimated. “The leaven is hid in the meal *until the whole shall be leavened*.”—As if our Lord had said, “Marvel not at the mixed state of the visible church, which I have described to you—it is permitted by Divine Pro-

vidence, that the end of the Gospel may be more effectually answered. For as leaven works upon meal in consequence of its being fully and closely blended with it—so *true Christianity*, by being thus mingled, and as you would think confounded, with the *mere profession* of it, will attain its greatest possible efficacy. For from this very circumstance, it will be infinitely more influential upon society, as well as more communicable to individuals; and of consequence will at length, by its silent but resistless energy, the more certainly assimilate the whole mass to itself."

My friends, we know but little of the ways of God; but surely our own experience may evince to us the wisdom of this providential appointment. For let us suppose, that from the beginning, the Church had been so regulated by divine providence, as to consist *only* of the *real* Christians who have been in the world, and that the *vast, nominal* profession of the Christian Faith, which has existed since a very early period, had not been permitted. We *cannot be certain*, that in this case *real* religion would have been more extensive; but we *may be sure* that our comforts, as Members of Society, would have been infinitely more limited.—Is it a small thing, think you, that we are no longer shocked with bloody sacrifices—no longer disgusted and harassed with the brutal stupidity of pagan superstition;—that the religion of the country no longer teaches lasciviousness by its public exhibitions, and every species of vice by the very examples of its objects of worship;—that we are no longer in danger of being either dragged or inticed to the shrine of idolatry, and that the true God alone is acknowledged amongst us;—that unnatural vice, which was openly professed by the most refined heathens, dare not, amongst us, shew its hideous head;—that our laws are temperate and rational; our public manners comparatively decent and orderly;—and that much of the fear of God, more than it is possible for us to calculate, pervades the mass of society; restraining

the audacity of the high, softening the savageness of the vulgar, and in an endless variety of ways promoting the security and happiness of the whole? And yet such are the invaluable blessings which we derive even from *nominal* Christianity, from the *mere public profession* of the Christian Faith. For if the bulk of mankind were to this day Pagans instead of nominal Christians, we cannot imagine that these blessings could have existed. Such reason then have we to adore the wisdom and the goodness of God in permitting the tares to grow up with the wheat, and the bad to be mingled with the good in the net of the visible Church.

But is it not evident that by the permission of this mixed state of things, the progress of real religion itself has been advanced and facilitated? Can you really think, it has been no advantage to *you* when you have been urging upon your hearers the practical truths of religion—that those truths were already generally acknowledged—that it was comparatively needless for you to prove them but merely to *apply* them? That you could appeal to the sacred volume as being in every one's hands—to catechisms which had been learned in childhood—to the forms of public worship—and even to the very public profession of Christianity, as vouchers of what you taught? Or do you seriously believe, that your labours would have been more easy and more successful had you been preaching to professed Pagans or Atheists? Why did not the Missionaries in the East Indies, why did not Mr. Elliot and Mr. Brainard in America, succeed as well amongst the heathen as Mr. Wesley succeeded in these kingdoms? Why were the converts of those pious men, both in the Eastern and Western world a mere handful, while the latter has been followed by countless multitudes? And why did the fruits of *their* labours in almost every instance dwindle away to nothing—while those of Mr. Wesley's labours have increased;—and if you could only be content to go on in the path he pointed out to you, would probably still

increase, beyond conception? Whence, I say, has arisen this striking difference? Is it not to be attributed to this *one* cause; that in the former instances, the soil was infinitely less favourable for the reception of the seed of practical truth than in the latter? That, in the one case every circumstance impeded; in the other, every circumstance assisted? In a word, that those excellent men laboured in a country, and amongst a people sunk in the black darkness of Paganism, while Mr. Wesley laboured in countries where all who heard him bore the Christian name, and already acknowledged the obligations of the Christian religion?—On the whole, then, have we not the fullest proof that the Great God, in permitting the mixed state of the visible Church, and thereby leaving room for the widest extension possible of the Christian profession, acted, as in all his other dispensations, in a manner infinitely wise and gracious; and that that decree, “*Let both grow together till the harvest,*” demands not our acquiescence only, but our most cordial gratitude and praise?

And now, my friends, let me seriously ask you, what becomes of the *duty* which you have so lately discovered—The *duty* of those, who esteem themselves *real* Christians, to separate from the Church to which they have been united, because they think the majority of its members and ministers destitute of the life and power of religion? Is it not plain, that if this supposed duty had been carried regularly into practice from the beginning, it would have necessarily counteracted the whole scheme of Providence with respect to the visible Church—That by this means, the *wheat* would have been taken from among the *tares*; the *leaven* would have been withdrawn from the *three measures of meal*, and the *good* would have been separated from the *bad* before the gospel net was brought to land? And do you not see, that if it is a *duty*, it is such a one as implies disobedience to God’s commands, contradiction to his gracious

purpose, and usurpation of his incommunicable prerogatives ?

There is one more passage of scripture which is so exactly to the purpose, that I cannot omit mentioning it ; although I should imagine, that what has been already adduced, is sufficient to satisfy any person who is content with the guidance either of reason or of scripture. What I refer to, is our Lord's message to the Church of Sardis, in the third chapter of the Revelation. It is remarkable, that our Lord gives the very same character to that Church which you have given to the Church of England. "Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments ;" evidently implying, that all, except those *few*, were destitute of "the life and power of religion." Now, if in such circumstances, it had been the duty of the few to separate from the rest, here was a fair occasion for our Lord to declare it ; and we cannot doubt, but he would have done so both for their sakes to whom he spoke, and on account of those, who, in after ages, should be in a similar situation. But does our Lord do so ? You know he does not give the slightest intimation of it. What then are we to infer ? Surely that *his* silence on the subject ought at least to *silence* those who talk of separation as a *duty*. See note No. 2.

It was doubtless in consequence of these irresistible considerations that the sober-minded servants of God, in all ages, have been so conscientiously cautious with respect to *needless separation*. The German Reformers, we know, lamented the necessity that was laid upon them, of separating even from the Church of Rome ; and they eagerly supplicated for a general council, in hope, that by that means, it might still be left in their power to continue in it with a clear conscience. When the Council of *Trent* was called, tho' under circumstances, which left little ground for hope, *Melancthon* resolved to attend it, even at the risk of being treated as *John Huss* had been by the Council of *Constance*, and he had actually set out upon

his journey, when he was stopped, by the orders of his Sovereign, the Duke of Saxony. How anxious he was on this subject, what pains he took, and what distress he felt that those pains were ineffectual, they who have looked into his truly pious letters, which are still preserved, need not be informed. It was his daily grief that new wounds should be inflicted on the body of Christ; and that the certainty and clearness of the Christian Faith should be obscured, and the great end of it frustrated, by multiplied divisions: And therefore, instead of rushing into separation as a thing to be desired, he deplored and deprecated it as one of the greatest of evils.

The same conscientiousness marked the conduct of the English Puritans. They scrupled complying with some of the ceremonies of the established Church; but they desired nothing more than the liberty of continuing in its communion, on such terms as their consciences could submit to. In order to obtain these, they reasoned, they expostulated, they entreated; they had recourse to the King, to the Parliament, to their conformist brethren. They did not *go out*, they deeply lamented that they should be *thrust out*. Even then, they did not give up their pacific endeavours; but whenever the smallest shadow of hope presented itself, they renewed their suit, and left no honest means of re-union unattempted: And this they did, because they were convinced that *voluntary* separation would have been a heinous sin, and that nothing tended more to obstruct the progress of Christianity in the world, than the divisions of professing Christians.

The sentiments which *Richard Baxter* has delivered upon this subject, in his *Christian Directory*, are well worthy the attention of every conscientious person. I lament that the book is not within my reach; and that my recollection of the passages is too imperfect, to authorize me to transcribe them from memory. One observation, however, I cannot avoid mentioning. I am certain of

the substance, if not of the very words.—“ The
 “ sin of separatists, saith he, hath this peculiar
 “ aggravation, that they generally father it upon
 “ God. If the drunkard, the whoremonger, or
 “ the blasphemer were to lay of his sin, it is the
 “ will of God, and I serve God by it, would you
 “ not be shocked? The divisions of the Church
 “ will never be well cured, until men feel that
 “ God hath forbidden *unnecessary separation* as
 “ really as he hath forbidden drunkenness, un-
 “ cleanness, or blasphemy.”

In proof of the opinion of the later Dissenters upon this head, and of the sincere wish which they entertained to be re-admitted into the communion of the Church of England, I copy with pleasure a passage from the preface of the wise and good Dr. Doddridge, to Archbishop Leighton's commentary on the First Epistle of St. Peter, which I earnestly recommend to your serious consideration. “ It is
 “ truly my grief,” saith he, “ that any thing
 “ should divide me from those, to whom I am
 “ united in bonds of as tender affection, as I bear
 “ to any of my fellow Christians. And it is my
 “ daily prayer that God will, by his gentle but
 “ powerful influence on our minds, mutually dis-
 “ pose us more and more for such a further union
 “ as may most effectually remove *the scandals our*
 “ *divisions have occasioned*, and strengthen our hands
 “ in those efforts, by which we are attempting,
 “ and might then, I hope, more successfully attempt the
 “ service of our common Christianity.” (See note 3d.)

And now, my friends, is it not extraordinary, that there should be such a striking difference of sentiment and conduct, between these holy men and you? Is it not very strange that what they avoided as a sin, and deprecated as a calamity, you should prefer as an advantage, and practise as a duty? You see there must be a palpable error either on your side or on theirs. Will Christian humility or will common sense permit you to determine at once, that you are right, and that they were wrong? My friends, if you wish to appear up-

right before God and man, this one circumstance should engage you, humbly, candidly, and attentively, to weigh the arguments which have been offered to you.

Another powerful reason, why you should do so, arises from the scandalous and pernicious dissensions now prevailing amongst you. Of *all* the particular questions pending between you and the opposite party, I pretend not to be a judge. But it seems pretty evident, even on the face of the business, that the steps which you have taken toward separation, have largely contributed to produce the disagreement.

You accuse the Bristol Trustees of having arbitrarily excluded from the Preaching-houses in which they have power, a preacher appointed by the conference :—And they, on the other hand, accuse you of forming yourselves into an independent sect, by establishing a separate ordination, and administration of the sacraments.—That this is the fact, you yourselves have not attempted to deny.—And if you are actually doing so, it must appear to every unprejudiced observer, that your conduct is as gross a violation of the fundamental principles of Methodism, as any thing that you can lay to the charge of the Bristol Trustees.

That Methodist preachers are not clergymen, but laymen—that they are not to administer the sacraments, but only preach, exhort and pray in the societies and congregations—that they themselves are to attend the Church of England—to receive the sacrament there—and to exhort all who have not been bred Dissenters to do the same :—that, in short, the Methodists are not a separate sect, nor an independent church, but merely a *Religious Society* : These, I conceive, are principles of Methodism, which have been more solemnly sanctioned, more repeatedly confirmed, and more studiously held out to the world, than any regulations whatever respecting Preaching-Houses or Trustees.

Granting then that every thing you have stated

relative to the Bristol Trustees is a fact ; granting that they have acquired, and persist in exercising, a power inconsistent with the regulations of Methodism, and that they are thereby violating the laws of the connexion ;—still, in all this, they are doing no more than you are doing also. And so long as you set them so perfect an example, your pathetic lamentations for their misconduct, must appear to the unbiaſſed public as somewhat worse than prepoſterous.

If you indeed imagine, that you have a right to demand obedience to the rules of Methodism from others, while you are tranſgreſſing them yourſelves, or that you are authorized to determine at pleaſure, which of thoſe rules you will obey, and which rejeſt ;—If I ſay you lay claim to theſe more than *papal prerogatives*, you may ſatisfy yourſelves with reſpect to the part you are acting : But you will find it hard to acquit yourſelves to the world of groſs inconfiſtency, and ſhameful partiality.

If anything can exceed the ſtrangenefs of this conduct, (excuse me my friends, I cannot ſay otherwiſe) it is the high complimentary ſtile in which you ſpeak of the late Mr. *John Weſley*.—You call him your *venerable Father*.—You pronounce him the *beſt judge of what tends either to the advancement or diſſolution of Methodism*. You declare yourſelves in the very predicament which he ſuppoſed, and you aſſert that *you have followed his directions* ; and all this (who would believe it ?) at the very moment that you are treating his moſt earneſt advice with contempt, and trampling his moſt ſolemn injunctions under your feet.

You know, and the world knows, that amongſt innumerable other declarations of his ſentiments on the ſame ſubjeſt, Mr. *Weſley*, ſo late as the year 1790, published the following expreſſions :—
 “ I never had any deſign of ſeparating from the
 “ church. I have no ſuch deſign now. I do not
 “ believe the Methodiſts in general deſign it,
 “ when I am no more ſeen. I do, and will do all

" *that is in my power to prevent such an event.*---
 " Nevertheless, *in spite of all that I can do*, many of
 " them will separate from it; (although I am in-
 " clined to think not one half, perhaps not a third
 " of them). These will be so *bold and injudicious* as to
 " form a separate party, which *consequently* will
 " dwindle into a *dry, dull, separate party*. In *flat*
 " *opposition* to these, I declare once more, that I
 " live and die a member of the Church of Eng-
 " land, and that *none who regard my judgment or ad-*
 " *vice* will ever separate from it." (See note No. 4).

My friends, is there any certainty in language,
 or any meaning in actions? If there is, you are
 the men whom your *venerable Father* pronounced,
 by anticipation, *bold and injudicious*.. You are
 they whose future progress, " the best judge of
 what tends to the advancement or dissolution of
 Methodism," has described, when he said, "*They*
will dwindle into a dry, dull, separate party.—You
 are they to whom he declared himself *in flat oppo-*
sition, and whom he considered as neither *regard-*
ing his judgment or advice. In the distant hope of
 warning you of your danger, he sketched with a
 dying hand the melancholy picture, and you have
 rewarded his care by *copying* what he meant you
 should *abhor*. And do you still call him your
venerable Father? Truly your filial respect is of a
 matchless kind. It is a capricious and arbitrary
 reverence, which beats the " capricious and ar-
 bitrary power" of the Trustees all to nothing.

Still, however, you profess to lay no restraint
 upon your hearers, and to leave it at their option,
 either to attend your separate worship, or the
 Church, as they think proper. " Who," it is
 asked, " hinders their going thither? Have they
 " not free liberty to go as often as they please?
 " Is any compulsion of any kind used, with re-
 " spect to man, woman, or child?" My friends,
 permit me to ask, what compulsion would you use?
 Do you know any sect of separatists who ex-
 communicate their hearers for going, when they
 think proper, to other places of Christian wor-

ship? The Church of Rome itself barely goes this length. "But are those," it is added, "who love their brethren *most*, and delight to join with them in *all* the means of grace, to be the only persons who are denied this Christian liberty?" So then, those who do not join with you in *all* the means of grace, love their brethren comparatively *little*, and of course will be comparatively *little* esteemed by their brethren. And do you seriously think that even this hint contains in it no "compulsion of any kind?" I am much mistaken if every impartial man, who is acquainted with the general economy of your Societies, will not discover in it, the menace of as effectual a species of torture, as ever was applied by an inquisitor. What! to be marked out, to be stigmatized by preachers and people, as luke-warm, as half-hearted, as deficient in brotherly love! Does not every one see that it would be misery to continue amongst you in such circumstances, and that by a procedure of this kind, I mean by the mere operation of the principle which this intimation supposes, every person in connection with you, will be *compelled* to join you, as you express it, in *all the means of grace*, or to leave you entirely.

The *Christian candour*, the *childlike simplicity* of such a conduct I leave. But what, after all, is this *test* of superior love to you and to your brethren? Why—"tell it not in Gath,") it is to *disregard the judgment and advice of your venerable Father, and to act in spite of all that he could do.*—It is to be what "the best judge of the interests of Methodism" accounted *bold and injudicious*, and to do what he predicted would be *inevitably destructive of the very life and soul of the institution.* My friends, once for all, I advise you, spare the Bristol Trustees, till you set them a better example.—"First cast the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye."

But it seems that four years ago, when the ques-

tion of the New Chapel was first agitated, it was proposed, that on condition the Trustees would relinquish their power over the Broad-mead and Guinea-street Preaching houses, they should be appointed Trustees of the Chapel, and that a clause should be inserted in the deed of trust, stipulating that there should neither be service in Church hours nor administration of the sacrament, *unless the Trustees should consent to it.*—And great stress is laid on their not acceding to this arrangement, as if it was a conclusive proof of their being enemies to peace, and having acted with duplicity. Now I conceive that the propriety or impropriety of the Trustees in this particular, just turns upon one circumstance—that is, whether in case you should have attempted afterward to evade that clause, the Trustees of Broad-mead and Guinea-street Preaching-houses, would have had legal power to prevent you. If they would have had this, I scruple not to say that for peace's sake they ought to have acquiesced.—But if, on the contrary, they were aware that they would have had no such power, it appears *now*, beyond all question, that *they were right*. For when Mr. Wesley's wishes and injunctions, so solemnly, so strongly, and so feelingly expressed, and his positive prediction of the consequent downfall of Methodism, have had no effect upon you, may it not fairly be inferred, that no obligation, which could in any possible way be evaded, would have been sufficient to restrain you from your darling object?

Sincerity is in itself a very valuable virtue.—But even your *sincerity* in this instance would scarcely be to your credit, because it would follow, that the wish to gain a point with respect to two preaching houses, was sufficient to do that with you which neither your duty nor your gratitude to your venerable Father has been able to effect.—But can we indeed suspect you of having been sincere? Is it not evident almost from your own words, that this arrangement was made merely to

serve the present purpose, and was to be attended to afterwards no farther than was convenient.—We are told expressly that it was done to *quiet* the old Trustees, who made the service in Church hours, and the administration of the sacrament, their principal objection. Of course, if these unruly children had not been troublesome—if they had not needed a lullaby—it would not have been done at all.—And what, even then, did it amount to?—Why, an engagement to postpone it until *the Trustees should consent to it.*—But had you the smallest doubt of obtaining such consent the moment you intimated your wish for it? You knew well that the old Trustees could not have prevented it. They were but about a third of the whole number, and the rest were men of your own choosing. Let the impartial observer weigh these circumstances; let him compare them with your conduct since, and then let him answer the question, “What becomes of the deep laid plan to introduce ordination, sacraments, &c.?” A question, which had you acted otherwise than you have done, you might have put at this day with conscious triumph. But to put it under the present circumstances exposes you to the charge of a species of quibbling which you ought to think beneath you.

I am not surprised indeed, that in all those of your publications which I have seen, you seem studiously to evade the main question of Separation; and instead of going into a manly ingenuous avowal of your conduct in this particular, confine yourselves to a sort of dark, indirect hints. The consciousness which you must feel of your peculiarly awkward situation, is enough to occasion this. But I wonder that the same feeling did not somewhat restrain you in your censures of those of *your Brethren*, who have had either the bad or good fortune to disagree with you. Their *crime* seems to have been, that, reduced to the dilemma of one or other of two evils, they preferred that which, on the whole, they deemed the

least. On the one hand they saw you, in the opinion of your "venerable Father," *ruining the dearest, the essential interests of Methodism.* On the other hand, they saw the Bristol Trustees exercising a power, which *he* certainly, in the general disapproved of, and resisted, but which they in this particular instance, used for the express purpose of averting the impending ruin. In the conduct of the Trustees, they beheld the powers of the conference receiving a wound, which probably would never have been given but on *the present occasion*, and which at any time hereafter an amicable compromise might heal. In your conduct they saw, if he whom you esteem "*the best judge*" of its interests had any judgment at all, *Methodism itself pierced through the heart.*—And under these circumstances they did not espouse your quarrel. They did not unite with you in your "flat opposition" to the wishes of your venerable Father. They even dared, contrary to your desire, to preach to those who, perhaps by the only means in their power, withstood your innovation. And for this, with all the decisive brevity of a *French Tribunal*, you have pronounced them SEPARATISTS. I mean not to defend these gentlemen. I doubt not they are fully competent to defend themselves. But let candour, let impartiality judge, who best deserve the name of Separatists—*they or you!*

And what is all this for? Why, to maintain the rights of the Conference! And is *this* indeed become "*the one thing needful?*" Is it really no matter what inconsistencies you adopt; what contradictions you give to your own principles; what indignities you offer to your pious founder, if only the rights of the Conference be maintained? My friends, I fear you know not, just now, what spirit you are of. I fear you are suffering the simple, pure spirit of primitive Christianity, to give way to the contracted self-sufficient spirit of a petty Corporation; and that you are disputing about the shell, while a subtle and secret worm is gnawing out the kernel. What, I ask you, will

the rights of the Conference be worth, when you yourselves have lost that which could alone recommend you either to God or man, your unmixed attachment to, and zeal for the essentials of religion, or to use Mr. Wesley's awful words, when "you have dwindled away into a *dry, dull, separate party?*" Nay, what will your *Conference* itself be, but the corpse of Methodism, bearing to what it *was*, the same relation, that a lifeless mouldering carcase bears to the animated man? And what will be your *houses*, which now engross so much of your concern, but the sepulchral monuments of your departed piety?

My friends, for your brethren's sake, for your own sake, and for God's sake, so far distrust your own opinion, as once more to review this question. Unconnected with the Methodists, but by the ties of good will, I have endeavoured with honest plainness of speech, to bring you as close as possible to the point. I have attempted to shew you, that the forming yourselves into a separate sect, is a measure unnecessary in itself,—inconsistent with your avowed principles and reiterated declarations—and most alarming in its consequences;—and that it is contrary to the plainest intimations of scripture, as well as to the sentiments and practice of the best and wisest men.—I have also called your attention to the solemn, the *unevadable* denunciation of him for whom you profess such reverence. And I have unreservedly laid before you the gross inconsistency of your present conduct. If you feel no force in any thing I have said, you will of course go on in your own way. But if you should feel force in it, Oh resist it not! but suffer yourselves to be led back by the joint guidance of reason and Scripture, of the best and wisest men, and of your venerable Father, speaking to you as from the tomb, to that *sure and safe* path in which you have so long prospered, and wherein you may still enjoy the inexpressible blessings of peace and unity. For, on this ground, I am assured, the Bristol Trustees would still re-

joice to meet you. I am assured, that after all that has happened, they would gladly guarantee to you the Rights of the Conference, if you would guarantee to them old, unadulterated Methodism.

But if, after all, you will not hear ;—if all other considerations are swallowed up in that one Giant-Idea, the rights of the Conference, then I leave you to God, and turn, not hopeless, to the multitudes in your Societies.—Yes, to you—the thousands who once looked up to John Wesley as your spiritual Father, your guide, and your friend—who confided in his wisdom, and accounted his directions as the next best rule to the word of God—to you I address myself with affectionate anxiety. At this interesting crisis, your conduct in which may affect both your present and eternal happiness, it is incumbent on you to think for yourselves, as you must one day answer for yourselves to God. Suffer not then, I entreat you, any attachment to this or that individual, or any respect of persons, to seduce you from the sober and conscientious use of your own judgment. What, my friends, are the Preachers to you, if they no longer “ abide in the same “ calling wherein they were called ?” What, even the Conference, if it “ cast off its first faith ?” “ Who is Paul, or who is Apollos ?” It is your duty to try the Spirits, and to withstand even a Peter to the face, when he is to be blamed. One question only presses upon you, viz.—Which is, upon the whole, the safest course for you to pursue ?—Ask then your own understanding, whether you ought to think that path safest which you *know*, or that which you *know not* ;—that which has been *tried* for the period of *half a century*, or that which has *not been tried at all* ;—that in which *thousands have walked, comfortably and securely walked*, before you—or that which must be trodden for the first time by yourselves—that which your best earthly guide intreated you, almost with his last breath, to pursue, or that which he reprobated as the infallible road to ruin.

My friends, the disposition to change when once contracted, hardly ever exhausts itself in a single act. One alteration sanctions and facilitates another, as, the rock, when unfixed from its ancient bed, is rolled on afterward with half the labour. Before you commit yourselves to your leaders, for better for worse, it behoves you to enquire to what point they may at length conduct you. Suppose at some future period, they should take a liking to Antinomianism, to Arianism, or to Socinianism;—(this is *possible*—it *has been* the case with some, who were once as good men, and to all human appearance as well established men as they) in such a case, would you still follow them?—Hitherto the established Church has been a sort of harbour to Methodism, where its little bark has rode secure from those varying winds of doctrine by which dissenting sects are so often and so miserably agitated. The Liturgy, the Articles, and the Homilies, have been like so many immovable rocks under whose shelter no blast could affect you. But when you leave this harbour, and venture upon the vast and trackless ocean of separation, by what chart will you preserve yourselves from wandering, or to what standard will you appeal? Will it be to Mr. Wesley's judgment or his writings? Alas, your leaders begin their career by trampling these under their feet. Will it be to those remnants of the liturgy and articles which they may still condescend to retain? They will doubtless find as little difficulty in dropping these when they become troublesome, as they now find in dropping such parts of them as they already dislike. Will it be to the Bible? My friends, the Antinomian and the Arian make their appeal to this Holy Book with no less confidence than the orthodox. What then will be your security against the spirit of error? Nay, what certainty can you have that you yourselves will be disposed to resist it? If you acquiesce quietly in one flagrant violation of your princi-

ples, why should you be more shocked at the next which may be proposed to you? You may think you would, but "the heart is deceitful above all things;" and "he that trusteth it is a fool." Is thy servant a dog, said Hazael to the Prophet, "that he should do this thing?" But you know he did it notwithstanding. In a word, if you wish to act up to your principles *hereafter*, act up to your principles *now*. If you wish to be steady *hereafter*, be steady *now*. For, if human nature is the same in you that it has been in all who have gone before you; it may almost be asserted that *on this critical moment hangs all your future conduct*.

Turn, then, I entreat you, this matter in your deepest thoughts. Go over the different considerations which I have here laid before you;—weigh each particular—and then say, whether Mr. Wesley is not supported in his last, solemn charge to you, "*not to form yourselves into a separate sect*," by unanswerable arguments, and by irresistible authority, and whether, of course, you do not owe it to your character and to your conscience—to your usefulness and to your safety—to observe his injunctions;—and, "*in the calling wherein ye were called, therein to abide with God*."

N O T E S.

No. 1. For the sake of conciseness, and lest I should be diverted from my purpose, I argue as if the Church of England was as degenerate as those gentlemen are pleased to represent it. But let it not be thought that I admit, for one moment, the truth of such a position. On the contrary, I am astonished that those who read the *gospel* can yield to such a spirit of rash judgment. Have those men the discernment of spirits? Are they certain that there may not be, in the vast mass of society, much real piety, much of the genuine fear of God—which shuns the eye—which shews itself only in the closet, in the temper and in the conduct—which professes little, and is observed little—but which, perhaps with as real an approbation of the searcher of hearts, pursues “the noiseless tenor of its way,” through this to a better world. Let the Methodists use their own advantages, and follow the vocation to which they conceive God hath called them. But let them be cautious of determining upon the vocation of others. If they think God hath given to themselves ten talents, let them remember, that to others he gives five, and to others one. “Who art thou, saith the Apostle, who judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.” If it is presumption to judge of men *individually*, it must be the quintessence of presumption to pass sentence on them *by millions*. How different is the spirit of *some* of Mr Wesley’s people from his own! He was the most candid, the most liberal man I ever knew. Nay, I have heard him, in his last years, animadvert with severity on his own and his brethren’s rashness of speech in the commencement of their course. “We used to tell the people,” said he, “if you don’t know your sins forgiven, you’ll be damned.—I’m astonished that they did not take up stones and stone us like mad dogs.” I take the liberty of recommending to those rigid judges an attentive perusal of Mr.

Wesley's sermon on "Yet I shew unto you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12, 31.) which is in one of the volumes of the Arminian Magazine. They will find there a mildness of decision, and a liberality of judgment which they will not do amiss to imitate.

No. 2. It may be, that those who are determined to go on in their own way, will say that the Methodists are separatists already. It is not my province to prove that the Methodists have taken no steps toward separation. But I am inclined to think, that the essential parts of their system *hitherto* do not imply separation in the sense in which the gospel condemns it. The passages which are quoted above are evidently applicable to *ecclesiastical* separation only; i. e. to the forming an independent Church. A *kind* of separation may be an indispensable duty. It is for instance unquestionably a duty to separate from what is sinful, so, at least, as to take no part in it. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." It may be, in certain circumstances, a duty to separate from some persons, as customary companions, though not as fellow Christians. "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed, yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." And I own, I can see no reason why those who wish for more frequent opportunities of devotion and religious instruction than the established worship affords, may not associate amongst themselves for those purposes, without meriting the charge of being separatists. We read in Malachi; that, at a very degenerate period of the Jewish Church, when it seems both Priests and people were generally depraved, "they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another; that the Lord hearkened and heard; and that a book of remembrance was written before him for them who feared the Lord, and who thought upon his name." Now it cannot be doubted,

but that those pious persons held meetings for the purposes mentioned by the Prophet, apart from the stated congregation of the temple, and might probably have had a system of rules for the regulating those meetings. But still they were not separatists in any blamable sense, because their meetings were not in opposition, but subordination to the public worship: which doubtless they attended regularly; probably more regularly than any of their contemporaries. Upon *this* plan only, the Methodists, it is well known, have hitherto professed to proceed; and so far as they have adhered to it, they can scarcely be accused of *separation*. Separation, in the opinion of all the fathers of the Church, and indeed self-evidently consists in *Altare contra Altare*, i. e. one altar opposed to another; in other words, in an *independent ordination and administration of the sacraments*. This, however, it must be granted, has sometimes been submitted to as an *unavoidable* measure. Some have been driven to it by compulsion, as in the case of the English non-conformists in the reign of Charles the Second; and others have resorted to it, in consequence of the imposition of terms of Church-communion, which were evidently sinful, as in the instance of the first Protestants. In both cases it was an evil; and all truly good and wise men deplored it as such. But when men, *voluntarily* and of *set purpose*, without any necessity whatever, but merely because they think they are the *pious few*, and that the rest of their brethren are *destitute of the life and power of religion* separate from the rest, so as to form themselves into an independent Church—then, if there be, meaning in words—if there be certainty in language, they, directly, and in the grossest sense, violate our Lord's command, "Let *both* grow together till the harvest."—For (as has been shewn) the parable means this, or it means nothing. On another occasion, our Lord spoke a "parable to certain who trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and despised *others*." He evidently judged those persons to

be very blamable, more so perhaps than those whom they condemned. But the lengths to which *they* went were nothing compared to what we see at this day. The Pharisee, to be sure, thanked God that he was not as other men were, but still he condescended to worship God *in the same temple* with the Publican.

No. 3. In the foregoing pages, I have but just touched on the injury done to the interests of Christianity at large, by the endless divisions of its professors. But I conceive it a point of too much importance to be overlooked. To a reflecting mind it must be evident, that when a person first thinks seriously about religion, nothing tends more to distract him than the variety of sects of Christians. Even when vice and the love of pleasure have lost their seductive influence, and the man sincerely wishes to serve God if he only knew how, this fatal stumbling block still remains in his way, and has, in innumerable instances, rendered sincerity abortive. I should almost think that he who has never felt any degree of this uneasiness, has a great deal yet to learn. And I should wonder if any who had felt it, could deliberately strive to increase the causes of it to others. Even the warmest piety of a separate sect has this striking disadvantage, that in making converts from other sects, it lays its ground-work in *uncertainty*. No man can leave his own to join with another sect of Christians, without passing through a state of mental *unfixedness*. But how inauspicious is this beginning? Is it likely that that *Faith* should be *firm* which commences in *Scepticism*. Do not both reason and experience evince, that when once a person becomes unfixed in his religious principles, he hardly ever afterward acquires an habit of steadiness?—"Nothing," saith the wise and pious Baxter, "is more in the designs of Satan than so to confound men with variety of religions, as that they may think there is no certainty in any—and thus may wheel about from sect to sect, till they come to the point where they at

" first set out, and be at last deliberately of no religion, as they were of none at first for want of deliberation." In this particular, the Methodists have had an unspeakable advantage over all *independent* sects. They, and they only, did not begin by *unsettling* their converts. Going constantly to Church themselves, and being every where remarked as the most regular communicants, an attachment to them *unfixed* no pre-existing principles. Those who joined with them acquired no *habit of doubting*. They did not desert their native soil. On the contrary, they felt themselves more firmly rooted in it than ever. Such at least, until now, has been their uniform profession: and may we not assert, that wherever this profession has been most fully carried into practice; *there*, the moral and religious conduct of the Methodists has ever been most steady, and most exemplary, and the fervour of their piety least liable to degenerate into enthusiasm. For my own part, I am convinced that no circumstance in the Methodistical system has, on the whole, contributed so much to its real usefulness as this one. And when this is thrown away, I cannot doubt but it will soon become, like to many other dissenting sects,
 * a nest for hatching the harpies of infidelity.

But farther—the multiplicity of sects in the Christian Church not only disposes professing Christians to become infidels, but it furnishes the latter with one of their most powerful pleas, since they infer, or pretend to infer from this circumstance, that there is no certainty whatever in the faith of Christians, and that they themselves do not know what they would be at. "Don't tell me of your Christianity," says a Deist, "You would attempt to satisfy me, and you cannot satisfy one another; agree first amongst

* I mean no general censure upon Dissenters, personally considered. I acknowledge, with pleasure, the real worth, and the genuine piety of numbers amongst them: But I only refer to the fact which our experience has so largely proved, viz. the remarkable frequency of infidels, amongst almost all sects of Dissenters.

“ yourselves what Christianity is—then, and not
 “ till then, I shall listen to your account of it.”
 And in truth, there is something so plausible in this
 objection, that until it be done away by a closer
 union amongst the followers of Christ, we may
 despair of conquering infidelity by our separate
 efforts, let them be ever so assiduous. Our Saviour
 in effect tells us this in his last solemn act of devo-
 tion with his disciples. In it, he prays that they
 all (all who shall believe on him) may be one,
 “ that,” says he, “ the world may believe that
 “ thou hast sent me.” What does this imply,
 but that without unity amongst professing Christ-
 ians, the general reception of the Christian Faith
 is not to be expected—and that consequently he
 who promotes disunion by forming *unnecessary*
separations, is the enemy of Christianity, and the
 ally of infidels? It is exquisitely idle to say, that
 because separations have been multiplied, the sin
 of making them has ceased; as if the numberless
 wounds which have been already given to the
 mystical body of Christ could make it innocent to
 inflict new ones. Let those who imagine this, re-
 member, that when our Lord declared, “ It must
 “ needs be that offences will come,” he added,
 “ But woe unto that man by whom the offence
 “ cometh:”—And let them consider also, that St.
 Paul places *heresies* (by which some of the soundest
 critics understand *unnecessary separation*.—See
 Doddridge in Loc.) amongst those works of the
 flesh, of which he says, “ That they who do such
 “ things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

I think I have read somewhere, that when the
 herds of cattle upon the Alps, see themselves in
 danger of being attacked by wolves, they draw
 together, and form a close phalanx. If ever there
 was a time when it was necessary, for the professors
 of Christianity, to follow this example, it is the
 present.—We are indeed threatened by “ the
 “ wolves of the evening,”—by those who would
 deprive us, at once, of our present comforts and our

future hopes—and who hate Christianity, because it is the support of social order, and the source of humble and peaceful virtue.—Surely at such a period, the petty distinctions of Christians, who by accident or misunderstanding have heretofore been separated from each other, ought to be forgotten and swallowed up in a sense of the common danger. Are they, then, the friends of Christianity, who, at such a moment as this, would foment division, and create new breaches?—who would furnish additional arguments to the infidel, and add fresh embarrassments to the sincere? Are they the friends of good order, who, without being influenced by any prejudice of education—without being impelled by any conscientious scruples—would leave, in this day of danger—wilfully and needlessly leave the Church to which they have been united, and all the doctrines of which they profess to believe—and join the enemies of all Religion and all Government in their yelping cry against establishments? Doubtless that person could only pass for a traitor or a madman, who would excite feuds and factions in a city, when a bloody and implacable enemy is at the gates.—And if there are any amongst the Methodists who will persevere in so bad a work—after being apprized of their error—charity itself may be tortured before it will find an apology for their conduct.

No. 4. Mr. Wesley's well known declaration, which I have quoted above, is to be found in the Arminian Magazine of April 1790, page 214. It is, in my opinion, the more interesting, because it appears like a last effort of understanding. There is still the same warmth of heart, and the same penetrating judgment; but the neat terseness of language which used to distinguish every thing that came from him, is gone. The light of life appears glimmering in its socket; but still, with

* He who has seen Paine's last publication will understand me—fully.

tremulous eagerness, he holds it forth, to turn, if possible, his beloved children from destruction.— But let it not be thought that he *then* spoke what he did not think *before*. No; these last solemn words were the result of long consideration and uniform conviction. I solemnly aver, that in the year 1777, or 1778, I asked him the question, “Sir, in case the Methodists should, after your death, leave the Church of England, what would you advise your friends to do?” He answered immediately, “I would advise them to adhere to the Church, and quit the Methodists; but, added he, that never will be necessary; for if some quit the Church, others will adhere to it, and then there will be *Dissenting Methodists* and *Church Methodists*. If his words *must* be fulfilled, I trust they will be **WHOLLY** fulfilled.

E N D.